

## Wine of the week: DeLoach Vineyards 2014 California Chardonnay

by Peg Melnik

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Brian Maloney was cradled in Wine Country, born on his family's ranch in the Petaluma Gap, which straddles the Sonoma County and Marin border.

He is the winemaker behind our wine-of-the week winner — the DeLoach, 2014 California Chardonnay at \$12, a steal for the quality.

The DeLoach bottling is an approachable chardonnay for the budget-minded.

It's floral with a kiss of orange blossom and, on the palate, notes of melon and pear. It's lightly toasted and balanced, over-delivering, which makes it a great pick to have on hand for the holidays.

Maloney, 34, has experience crafting chardonnay in a range of regions within California and beyond. In addition to DeLoach, his brands include Buena Vista and the Boisset Collection, all owned by vintner Jean-Charles Boisset.

"As a winemaker for Boisset Collection, I've also been exposed to winemaking styles of chardonnay in the birthplace of the grape, Burgundy, France, as well as the south of France, in Languedoc-Roussillon," Maloney said.

"I also have experience producing sparkling wines from chardonnay, so I'm very comfortable working with this varietal. I believe it's one of the true varietal classics that can produce wines with incredible, depth, beauty and expression of terroir."

With this in mind, Maloney's approach is hands-off.

"My goal is to allow the varietal to express this terroir and, in doing so, the varietal will also showcase its best self, coming from the specific unique place," he said.

"At DeLoach Vineyards, we strive to produce distinctive wines that spotlight unique terroirs ... utilizing minimally intrusive winemaking techniques."

Maloney explained that the grapes for the 2014 chardonnay were grown in the warm, sunny, sustainably-farmed vineyards in the Delta region of California. Most of the grapes were fermented in stainless steel to retain the essence of the crisp, fresh fruit.

Later, Maloney said, he blended in richly textured barrel-fermented chardonnay.

While a student at UC Davis, Maloney said he was inspired to be a winemaker after hearing legendary winemakers Paul Draper and Greg LaFollette speak at a lecture.

"It was seeing these incredibly passionate people talk about the way they found themselves in wine, and the level of care they took in their labor. I knew winemaking was for me."

Maloney said when producing chardonnay his goal to "unlock" its potential.

"Depending on the location of the vines, the clones used, the rootstock — all of these elements play a huge part in how chardonnay expresses itself."